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ABSTRACT

Arguing that teachers need to provide direct instruction if they expect children to learn to apply semantic or syntactic clues as they are reading, this paper presents a variety of activities for teaching children to use context clues. Among the more than 35 activities described are: gathering clues from pictures, using a language experience approach, using a dictionary to discover context clue meanings, playing a word guessing game, nonsense story clues, playing Concentration, scrambled words and context cluing rebus writing, trigger words, talking workbooks, take away a letter, and scrambled sentences. (HTH)

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CONTEXT CLUES: USEFULNESS
AND CREATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES

Presented at:
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A review of the literature and basal reading series reveals when methodology texts and basal reading series are compared, a variability exists regarding the teaching of context clues. Although there is agreement that context clues can be a valuable means of word attack or as a help for the mature reader to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words in print, no specific guidelines determine how they should best be taught. From this author's viewpoint, context clues whether they are taught using semantic or syntactic clues, the teacher needs to provide direct instruction if we expect children to learn and apply contextual clues as they are reading. If students are taught how to use context clues they are more inclined to guess than to break the continuity of what they are reading and go to a dictionary. Instruction can replace the guesswork with a more useful strategy.

According to Alexander (1983), "using an array of context clues to assist with reading should be emphasized from the earliest stages in the reading program" (p. 102). In teaching context clues children can begin to see that reading is an extension of already known language skills. Young children often read words in sentences that they cannot recognize in a list.

Readers of all ages consciously and unconsciously use context to figure out the meanings of unknown words. Spache (1982) suggests that children use contextual clues by thinking out the relationships and by drawing on their experiences with language through listening, speaking, and reading. Children respond to clues of mood, tone, and synonyms, not because they know the terms to describe these things, but because they have experienced such things before and can guess the meaning.

Pictures are a source of clues for identifying unknown words. Pictures may be used to identify one word or groups of words as in phrases and sentences. Teachers can encourage the use of picture clues by having children look at an accompanying picture when they are unable to identify a given word.

As in the analysis of basal readers presented in the previous discussion, it was found many context clue activities were isolated activities. Examples of these were shared. If teachers continue to use these types of activities as their major method of teaching, a study by Emans and Fisher (1967) should be included here. The teacher can use the hierarchy of clues to which follows instruction from easiest to most difficult.

1. (Least difficult). Consonants given, vowels omitted.
The c_rp_nt_r built a new sailboat.
2. Four word choices given.
The _____ built a new sailboat.
Insect carpet machine carpenter

3. Beginning and ending letters given.
The c _____ r built a new sailboat.
4. Length of the word given.
The _____ built a new sailboat.
5. Beginning letter given.
The c _____ built a new sailboat.
6. (Most difficult). No clues given other than context.
The _____ built a new sailboat.

It appears that the researchers found results similar to Durkin (1978-79) in her study of comprehension. In many basal reading series today, students are being asked to practice by filling in blanks, writing in the correct word from a choice of three or more words, or by writing in a word that begins with the correct letter, however, very little initial instruction or application of these skills to actual reading situations was found. This author advocates that for students to use context clues effectively, there must be a variety of direct instruction by the teacher and subsequent practice given in applying these skills.

The suggested activities included here are ones that a teacher can use to achieve variety in the teaching of context clues.

- * Show a picture of a scene in a park, at the beach, etc. and have numbers on each object in the picture. Write sentences to describe the picture using nonsense words to complete the blank spaces.

Example: The _____ is ready to go into the water.
Answer (splinx)

- * Find a picture of an attractive scene. Put covering over it. Child names the various items in the picture. The teacher writes the words as given. Remove the picture. Have several sentences in which the children must use the words they named in the picture to complete the blanks.
- * Next show a picture of a scene and have words missing from the sentences to be identified from clues in the picture.

Example: a. Manda is playing with the _____. (dog)
b. The color of the cat's fur is _____. (brown)
c. Manda is sitting _____ the flowers and the tree. (between)

Other sentences could be constructed in which several words might be appropriate.

Example: a. It was a _____ day. (sunny, warm, pleasant, nice)
b. There are _____ trees. (three, some, pretty, several)

* Nonsense Story Clues

Using a nonsense word as a title and main character, write a brief story about this "thing." Show one or two sentences at a time to have students determine what the "thing" is. Point out how the context is important to give clues as to what the "thing" is that is being described. Ask questions after each new idea is added, and ask if they can identify the object and what information gave them the clue.

Example:

Twerple

Oxygen is important for survival.

Size is of little importance.

Water provides the habitat for this organism.

Lack of arms and legs is not a problem, even though it has fine limbs.

A rough skin helps it adhere to the floor.

What is it?

Answer: a starfish

You can have older students write their own stories containing clues and share with the class.

* Listening (Fuqua)

Rhyming is a good way to begin teaching context clues by listening. Start with a two-line rhyme and progress to short stories. You can use a two-line rhyme such as "John caught the high ball because he is...(tall)." This prepares a student to listen to a short story and supply omitted words. Begin by reading the complete story, then reread omitting words and phrases for students to provide. The books Awful Alexander by Judith Choate and One Fine Day by Nonny Hogrogian contain excellent stories with words and phrases that are repeated often. (p. 585)

* Mark Edward's Story

Have students fold an 8½" x 11" paper into 4 parts. Number each box front and back 1-8. Read Mark Edward's Story and have students draw and listen for context clues as they are given. (See attached story)

- * Use the following activity without any pictures. Have a student read the sentence with the nonsense word. Ask them to replace it with a root word (or a derived word) that would make sense in the sentence.

- Example:
1. Ding to the house. (run)
 2. Sally has a ding in her stocking. (run)
 3. This morning my car would not ding. (run)
 4. Lucas is a fast dinger. (runner)
 5. Manda is dinging in the race. (running)

After students complete this activity with the teacher, have pairs of students make up similar sentences to be "solved" by other students.

Use sentences from the basal reader substituting nonsense words for verbs, nouns and adjectives. Have students complete the sentences recalling the "real" words used by the author.

* Multiple Meanings

Have students make illustrations of words with multiple meanings. Next have students write a sentence including the word correctly in context.

Example: tie



Home 10	Visitors 10
------------	----------------

1. The line connecting two notes in music is called a tie.
2. Donna used a red ribbon to tie the bow on the present.
3. Father wore his new striped tie to church.
4. Ten to ten is a tie score.
5. One of the ties on the railroad track came loose.

Other multiple meaning words are run, left, ring, plate, lodge, play, lack, figure, draw, pick.

* Multiple Meanings Match-up

Write the definitions at the top of a 9" x 12" piece of oak tag or use a file folder. Next write several sentences using the different meanings of the words. Have the same definitions which were on the top of the card also written on individual cards. Leave a space after each sentence. Students are to match the correct definition of the word with the way it is used in the context of the sentence by placing the card beside it. Can be made self-checking.

chop	
Definitions	
1.	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.
1. Sentences	Place cards here
2.	
3.	

cards with definitions
to be used to match
with correct sentences.



* Clues From Pictures (Gutzler and Linn)

On a large sheet of paper, mount a picture from a discarded book or magazine. Beneath it, write four or five questions that can be answered by looking at the picture.

Examples: (Picture of children playing tennis on a school playground.)

1. What season of the year is this?
2. What kind of weather is it?
3. How many children could play tennis here at one time?
4. Are any of the players showing signs of emotion?
5. What sports equipment do the players have?

(Picture of a rain forest with several dogs and a boy crossing a small stream on a log. The boy is carrying a spear.)

1. What time of the day is it?
2. Where is the boy going?
3. Where did he get the spear?
4. Why does he carry a spear?

(p. 45-46)

* Antecedents (Gutzler and Linn)

Pronoun antecedents are an important clue to comprehension, but they are often difficult for children to grasp. In fact, pupils may become confused when a pronoun replaces a noun in a sentence. However, these meaning clues can be taught by means of limited sight-vocabulary. Write the following on the chalkboard.

Examples: 1. The four boys are going to the park.

They want to play ball.

They stands for _____.

2. You will find the marbles in a red box.

It is in the cupboard.

It stands for _____.

3. The girls walked to the library for books.

They arrived there at 2:30.

There stands for _____.

4. The police officer asked Jorge for his driver's license.

He had it in his wallet.

He stands for _____.

It stands for _____.

5. Kristina is the girl whose bicycle was stolen.

Whose stands for _____.

6. "We were wondering whose motorcycle this is," the police officers told Rita who came trudging along with a can of gasoline.

We stands for _____.

This stands for _____.

Who stands for _____.

7. "Are these your coins or mine?" Warren asked his sister Carrie.

These stands for _____.

Mine stands for _____.

8. The people who watched the volcanic fires swore the glowing mouth must be the entrance to Hades itself. Itself stands for _____.
9. Only one resident of the village survived--a prisoner in the jail, which was below street level. Which stands for _____. (p. 46)

* Use Language Experience Approach

After students have dictated a story to the teacher, omit certain words (every fifth one) as in the cloze procedure. Have the children complete the sentences. Next have students find an appropriate synonym for each noun, verb, or adjective used and read the story with the new words.

- * Context clues are often based upon experiences. Use sample sentences to illustrate and then have students construct their own sentences omitting a word. Exchange and "solve" each others missing words.

Example: The boy put a _____ on a hook and threw out his line.

- * Use sentences from a story in the basal reader. Make a "die" from fitting one small milk carton inside the other. Cover with contact paper. Write who, what, when, where, why on each side (one word per side). Students roll the die, then find a sentence that has the clues to answer the question.

Example sentence from story: The boys played baseball in the park every Saturday.
Student rolls die--When is face up.
Answer is: every Saturday.

* Generic Character

Use a cartoon type of character drawn to portray someone with several types of occupations. What can he be doing? Example: someone wearing overalls could be a foreman on the job, a mechanic, a carpenter, a plumber repairman, add a hard hat and he becomes a company manager visiting a construction site. Have students construct several good descriptive sentences as to whom they think the character is or what he is doing. The teacher then "points out" that the context of the sentence or story will determine what the author expects that person to be doing or portraying.

Have students write a story in which the main character is portrayed as having one of the roles discussed earlier in the lesson.

* Mad Libs

These stories can be purchased at a book store or from Scholastic Books. Teachers could construct their own story using a specific historical event as the theme.

Example: Columbus sailing to America.

Example: Students beside number 1 list a noun
number 2 list a verb
number 3 adverb
number 4 adjective
number 5 noun
etc.

(Mad Libs continued)

Read the story to the children in which they insert a word on their list. This can elicit some interesting and humorous stories--depending upon the word choices and the context.

* Play Concentration

Place sentences on 3x5 cards omitting one of the new vocabulary words. On 3x5 cards place the vocabulary words. Turn all cards face down on the table. Students turn over two cards at a time and try to find the correct vocabulary word to fit the context of the sentence.

* Context Clues - Where are they?

Write sentences on a folder describing a scene or event that would happen at a specific place. Have the child match to each a card stating a location.

Examples: It was so dark I could not see so the usher helped me find a seat near the back - Theatre

The sand was so hot that it burned my feet so I put my sandals back on - Beach

* Context Clues - Figuring out new words

Write some sentences containing unfamiliar words in the folder. Have the child match word cards explaining the meaning to the sentence.

Examples: We heard the peal of the bells. (sound)
We climbed to the summit. (top)
He held his ears to shut out the din. (noise)
Joe was deluded by the magician's tricks. (fooled)
My favorite ride at the amusement park is going round and round on the carousel. (merry-go-round)

* Vocabulary Guide for Context Clues in Content Areas

The teacher prepares the following guide to give to students before they study a chapter.

Directions: The following list, from Chapter #6 on Mental and Emotional Disorders, contains words which you need to know to understand this unit. If you do not know the meaning of the word, use these clues to find the definition: C - context clue; I - illustration; and G - glossary. For words with no clues, see parts II and III.

PART I

(105) amnesia (C)
(106) compulsion
(110) grandiose (G, C, I)
(102) hypochondriac (C, G, I)
(104) hysteria
(112) manic (C)
(97) neurosis (C, G)

(105) neurotic depression (C, G)
(97) organic
(109) paranoid (C)
(103) phobia (I, C, G)
(97) psychosis (C, G)
(107) schizophrenia (C, G)
(98) stress (G)

(continued on next page)

PART II - short definitions

- (106) compulsion: an unconscious drive which compels you to do something.
- (104) hysteria: a highly emotional conflict which involves loss of muscle control.
- (97) organic: natural

PART III - complete sentences

Mary's worst compulsion was that she always had to step on the cracks in the sidewalk when coming home from school.

The child was hysterical as he kicked the wall and screamed.

Organic food (naturally grown) is becoming more popular in supermarkets today.

From: Foster, Bruce. Presentation at Keystone State Reading Association Reading Conference. Monroeville, PA; November 1981.

* Scrambled Words and Context Clues

On the board or on paper write approximately fifteen scrambled words with the dictionary or glossary page numbers where they can be found. Give each child a list of fifteen or twenty sentences. After students unscramble the words, they fit them into the correct sentence.

Example words: ttnoco, p. ____ (cotton) ganry, p. ____ (angry)

* Use the dictionary to aid in Context Clues Meaning

Write sentences or questions in which students guess the answer and then check the dictionary to verify the meaning.

- Examples:
1. What color is an emerald ring? (green, red, blue)
 2. Which is largest: a cricket, centipede, or an inch worm?
 3. Which would you enjoy for dessert: trifle, stroganoff, or mush?
 4. If you were going fishing, would you take: a soffet, a velocipede, or a leader?

* Mood or Tone

The teacher directs a brainstorming session with the students in which they write numerous descriptive words to describe a mood or feeling. Example: eerie, scary, joyful. Students are asked to write three sentences describing the mood or tone set by the word, but not actually using the word. A student reads his/her sentence orally and the others are to guess the word from the context.

* Bluejean Pockets - Context Practice (2 or 3 players)

In a file folder, make pockets that might be found on bluejeans. In one pocket put 3x5 cards containing sentences with a blank for the missing word. In the other pockets put words that will fit each of the sentences. Students draw one sentence card and one of the word cards. If the word fits the context of the sentence they keep both cards. If not, the sentence card and the word card are returned to the pockets and the next student takes a turn.

* Rebus Writing. Have a story written on the board or on a ditto sheet with drawings in place of some words:

 went to the . In the   saw a big .
On it was a  etc.

Include a dictionary (in the order used in the story)

1.  eye
2.  house

You can have students read the story. They can make up dictionaries of their own. Then have them make up their own picture stories to go along with them. Have them use words from their readers or experience charts. Have the students pass them around without a dictionary. Using the pictures and context, the other students can guess at the words.

* Trigger Words. To get students to talk more and to have them make use of context clues, give students a list of opposites.

Directions: I'm going to say a word. You say the very first thing that comes into your mind that is opposite when I say it.

List I

1. up (down)
2. right (wrong)
3. good (bad)
4. day (night)
5. left (right)
6. play (play)
7. stop (go)
8. fat (thin)
9. found (lost)
10. in (out)

List II

1. here (there)
2. open (shut)
3. clean (dirty)
4. cold (hot)
5. come (go)
6. dog (cat)
7. sister (brother)
8. girl (boy)
9. waitress (waiter)
10. white (black)

Then try longer responses (and more opportunity for use of context)

1. ...cake and ice cream usually means (someone is going to have a birthday party)
2. ...cats, and dogs usually...
3. ...when it is hot, I ...
4. ...my favorite food is...
5. ...if I put on a space suit and a space helmet...
6. I wash my face and hands and put on my pajamas...
7. ...when it rains and I have to go to school, I...
8. ...sneezes, fever, a runny nose, means...
9. ...TV with cowboys, Indians, and guns means...
10. ...tigers, lions, and monkeys means...

You can, of course, make up your own lists using questions on holidays, home, interests, and so forth.

* Talking Workbooks. If the children are using a regular workbook (or even on regular pictures from magazines), cartoon bubbles can be added to the pictures to give the children practice in writing.

In workbooks the vocabulary is right on the page so children will have some words with which to work.

Let the children hunt through magazines for pictures of people doing exciting things. They can choose situations that they're interested in and find words to fit the context of the picture.

* Scrambled Sentences. Give students sentences written in a mixed up manner. Have them copy the words in order to make a sensible sentence. This requires skill in sight vocabulary and context.

Vary the complexity of the sentences with the levels of the children. Also have students make up scrambled sentences for each other.

* Paired Associates Context Clues. Explain the concept of word pairs, "If I say bread, you would say ____." (butter) "If I say table, you would say ____." (chair)

Prepare sentences similar to those shown below. For oral language exercises, read the sentence, emphasizing the italicized word. One child or the group in unison supplies the proper word. Or use the same idea as a written exercise. (The first is written as a sentence; the rest are only listed as pairs. You would, of course, leave out the second word in the pair.)

1. Please pass the salt and pepper.
2. hat and coat
3. wash your face and hands
4. bacon and eggs
5. snack of cheese and crackers
6. pencil and paper
7. snow and ice
8. cream and sugar
9. beginning to end
10. soap and water

Other pairs to use in sentences include:

Aunt and Uncle	read and write
Puppy and kitten	hug and kiss
nephew and niece	life and death
daughter and son	comb and brush
bat and ball	top to bottom
spaghetti and meat balls	shoes and socks
cup and saucer	lost and found
needle and thread	day and night
boy and girl	hammer and nail

* Take Away a Letter. Use this activity to provide practice in working with words and using context clues in sentence format.

Directions: The first sentence in each series has one word underlined. You can take away a letter from this word and make a new word that will "fit" in the blank space of the next sentence. Continue this for each sentence.

1. Jack likes candy. His friend's name is _____. Jack _____ Andy are friends. They shared _____ apple. The boys always have _____ good time.

2. Ted paints a picture. Ted likes to _____. He cannot paint if he has a _____ in his finger. Did he get stuck with a _____? Yes, it went _____ his finger!

3. We saw a large boat on the lake. The cookies were made with _____ meal. I stayed _____ his house yesterday. We had _____ good time.

4. Rhode Island is a small state. A shopping center is sometimes called a _____. _____ of my friends like to go to the shopping center. I know a boy whose name is _____. He is _____ smart boy.

5. Our flag is sometimes called the Stars and Stripes. The top _____ on the flag is red. Each stripe is a narrow _____ of color. On our _____ we saw many flags displayed. A strong wind will sometimes _____ a flag.

* To provide practice in using sentence context and letter clues in supplying a missing word in a sentence, prepare a series of sentences in which a word is omitted but for which you provide the initial letter. The child writes a word that keeps the sentence meaningful. Examples:

Jerry lost his c _____.
Mary enjoyed the b _____ very much.
His hobby is r _____.

* Which to - too - two? Children in small groups work with a group of words, such as in the list below, written on the board or on a worksheet or on cards. Pupils take turns spelling orally the proper to, too, or two to fit the blanks and then using the phrase in an oral sentence.

Examples:

_____ big	_____ much	_____ apples
_____ sick	_____ cookies	_____ town
_____ go	_____ school	_____ bed

* To help students realize how often clues are given to the meaning of a word in the same sentence or paragraph, ask them to bring in samples they find in their individual reading. For example, in a newspaper headline, "Man Goes Berserk. Shoots 12," it's quite obvious what berserk means.

* Word Guess. Prepare a set of word cards, each card showing one word which names an object such as baseball, window, etc. At higher grade levels use any words rather than nouns only.

Divide the class into two teams. The first player on Team 1 will be "It" first. He will shut his eyes and put his head down on his desk. Then the teacher holds up a word card. When everyone has seen the word, the card is put down.

"It" may then call on his team, each one giving one sentence with context clues saying "blank" for the word. After he has called on five people, "It" gets ONE guess at the word. If he is correct, he wins a point for his team. Then the first player on Team 2 will be "It" and at the end of the playing time, the team with the highest score wins.

* Context Clues. Write on the board the words in the example or prepare a list of words well beyond the vocabulary level of your group.

Example:

pleach	arable	convey	miscreant	malevolent
plexor	dulcet	phantasm	ambiguous	exigent

Say to the class: "Look at the words on the board. Listen while I pronounce each word. Does anyone know the meaning of any of these words?" (Encourage class discussion. If children know, or think they know, the meaning of any of these words, write their definitions by the appropriate words.) "I will read a sentence, raise your hand if you think that you know what the word means by the way it is used in the sentence." Example: The shipwrecked men built a shelter of branches pleached with broad leaves to keep out the sun and rain. (Children should be able to decide the word pleach probably means something like "fasten" or "cover." Its actual definition is "interweave." Sentences for the remaining words can be found in Anchor, pp. 89-90.)

* Make a list (on board, flannel board, etc.) of currently stressed vocabulary words (or of unknown words). On board or on a duplicated sheet write a group of sentences using these words. In each sentence omit the stressed word. Have students add the appropriate word to the sentence. Include context clues in the sentences.

* Have students select five words from a glossary of a book used by the class. They write five sentences, omitting the chosen words in each one. They read the sentences to the group. The other students try to guess the missing words from the context and from their previous reading.

* Write on the board or on dittoes groups of four words, three of which have related or similar meanings and the fourth being opposite or totally unrelated.

Example: frigid icy tepid numbing

Have students find the word which does not belong by letting them try to plug each word into a sentence with contextual clues. The word which does not belong will not make sense.

Example: The water was so _____ that my toes felt frozen.

* For 3rd to 4th grades (depending upon the complexity of the material used), this activity requires the use of context to choose a word which completes the sentence sense. Words may be verbs, nouns, adjectives or adverbs. In a small group, the first child draws from two boxes (one which contains a number of sentences without verbs; the other which contains the verb cards) one incomplete sentence and one verb card. The aim is to fit the verb into the sentence so that it makes good meaning. If the verb does not match the sentence, the sentence is placed face up in the center of the table and the player returns the verb card to the bottom of the pack. Other children, in turn, draw a sentence card and a verb card. A player may claim any sentence if his verb completes his sentence or one of the sentences in the center of the table. The child completing the most sentences wins. Sentences may be checked by the teacher.

Or for individual work, allow a child to match the verb cards (or adjective cards, etc.) to the sentences. Draw a box in which the card will fit in the blank space in every sentence. Make the exercise self-correcting by marking each sentence and the corresponding card with the same symbol.

* To work on both homonyms and context, have a list of homonyms on the board or duplicated on a sheet of paper (such as buy, by, pair, pare, pear, etc.). The leader or teacher uses one of the homonyms in a sentence. He may say, "I am going to by a pencil." The first child spells the homonym used. If he is correct, he scores a point. The first child who reaches 10 points is the winner. Two or more children may play and can keep their own scores.

* This game works with both context and figures of speech. A small group may play. Someone should be present to determine whether or not the responses are correct. Have a number of cards (approx. 1 by 4 in.) with a figure of speech on one side and its meaning on the other.

Example: It's raining cats and dogs.

It's raining very hard.

The cards are placed in a pile in the center of the table with the figure of speech side up. One player starts by taking the top card, reading it, and telling what the figure of speech means. He turns the card over and if his interpretation is correct, he keeps the card and the player on his left takes a card. If he misses, the card goes on the bottom of the pile and the player left plays. The player with the greatest number of cards after all have been taken from the center pile is the winner.

* Write on the board the examples shown (or make up your own). Children will need pencils and papers.

1. Put the car in the S U V G
2. Put the foot in the S U R L
3. Put the scrap paper in the D M W E
4. Put the flowers in the U V W X
5. Put the fruit in the A B C D
6. Put the milk in the G T A D
7. Put the water in the F L M P
8. Put the letter in the C E N O
9. Put the horses in the S D N R
10. Put the coins in the B R M T

Introduction to the Class:

Look at the first example. It says, "Put the car in the ..." Where would you put a car? Yes, in a garage. Garage starts with which of the four given letters? Yes, a G. By the number 1 on your paper write the word garage. For each example, think of a word to answer the question that begins with one of the four given letters and write it beside the number. (Accept any answers that the child can logically justify.) Suggested answers for the above examples:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. garage | 6. glass |
| 2. shoe, sock | 7. pitcher, pail |
| 3. wastebasket | 8. envelope |
| 4. vase | 9. stable |
| 5. basket | 10. bank |

* To introduce the idea of context clues and their importance, take a number of pictures from magazines, newspapers, etc. Cut out one part. For example, in a picture of a man changing a tire, cut out only the man who is bent over. Ask the children, "What is this man doing? You can see that he is bending over but what is he really doing?" Let them speculate on a number of possibilities and then put the man into the whole picture so that they can see that he is changing a tire. Talk about picture clues and word clues in reading. As you don't know what the man is doing without clues in the picture (tire, jack, car), you often cannot define a word without context clues. Ask the students what a word like scale means. You may get such answers as "part of the outer covering of a fish, an instrument for weighing, or a series of musical notes." Then ask them what scale means in the following sentence. "By piling one box on top of another and climbing on top of them, Frank managed to scale the high stone wall and drop down on the other side." To reinforce the idea of different meanings and context, have the students choose a word which has many meanings and illustrate as many as they can.

Have students try to define words in longer passages than just sentences by using context. Suggest that in such cases where the whole paragraph helps form a definition they look for answers to questions like these: How is it made? What is it used for? What does it look like? How is it done? Why is it important? What does it describe? What kind of action does it suggest?

With an older class discuss words such as desk and rich. A discussion of the word desk should bring out that the meaning of the word will always be fairly specific even though there are different types of desk. But in discussing the word rich, the students will come up with such meanings as "having a lot of money," "good-tasting" as rich ice cream, "vivid" as rich color in a painting, "full, pleasant" as in a rich voice, or "very funny" as in a rich joke.

Discuss other examples such as fair (applies to a mark on a report card, fair skin, fair weather, fair decision...). Then make the following assignment: "All this week pay particular attention to the words you use and those you hear and read. See how many words you can find that have different meanings in different circumstances. Don't take words like desk where by the addition of other words you can point out a particular desk; take words like rich and fair where the meaning of the word itself changes according to the way it is used. Perhaps we can find enough examples to start a bulletin board on one of the ways of language."

* Ask the students to investigate in an unabridged dictionary the meaning of common words applicable to different objects or different areas of experience and to determine why the general meaning is appropriate for the various specifics. One method is to divide the class into groups, giving each a noun that names a part of the human body--arm, eye, face, foot, hand, head, heart, leg, neck, nose. Students are to discover other areas of meaning. For example, arm may be used in reference to a chair, a ship, the sea, the government, and so on.

* Give students the italicized parts of these statements--fictitious quotations to interpret.

Senator Doe "The report of this committee is remarkable; never have I seen so many errors in a single document."

Critic A "Although the author had access to an abundance of reliable sources, he apparently did not use them."

Representative X "If the witness has told the truth, then it would appear that Mr. B is engaged in subversive activities; however, the witness has given no evidence to support his accusations."

Critic Y "Dressed in a fashionable gown, Singer C, charming and gracious, captivated her audience until she began to sing."

Afterward, give students the complete statements; then let them write their own, meeting with a partner to select effective examples for a bulletin board display.

Use the same procedure with sentences out of context. Remove from a paragraph a sentence having several interpretations; ask the students to think of possible meanings; then read the paragraph. The following sentences show how lacking in precise meaning even the simplest sentence becomes when removed from its context.

Moving was an ordeal. One or two whiffs was all he could stand.

They had scraped and pinched.

After students have given as many meanings as they can think of, read the sentence in their context.

* To show how the same word may have more than one meaning and depend upon context or the occasion when it is used, ask students to use, in as many different meanings as possible, words like these: run, slip, box, date, table, break, glasses, and crop. Play guess-the-word for a few minutes several days in a row. A student says, "I am thinking of a word of four letters, beginning with d; it can be eaten, it is a way to keep track of time, and some boys ask girls for them." Or, "I am thinking of a word beginning with c; some people carry one when they ride horseback; farmers gather them; a chicken has one; sheep do it to a grazing ground."

* To see how sentences depend upon context for meaning, present several sentences alone and then in context. Examples:

Sentence: The powder had to be used carefully. (face powder? dynamite? toothe powder?)

Sentence in context: On this journey, Livingston's life depended upon the game he was able to shoot. Also, in the jungle, he had to travel as lightly as possible. The powder had to be used carefully. The guns, alone, were heavy enough.

Sentence: He was blind.

Sentence in context: Brownie's first memory was of his mother's furry body and of his five squirming, hungry, helpless brothers and sisters. He weighed about a pound. He was blind. He could not walk, and he could not stand. He looked more like a rat than a dog.

After a few illustrations the teacher may set students to searching in books for particular good examples. The lesson may be concluded by dictating several sentences capable of various interpretations. The students compose paragraphs containing the sentences and then compare versions to see how much the sentences vary in meaning from one context to another. Here are several sentences for such an exercise:

It opened once again.

"We can't even eat him now," she wailed.

They took their time about the licking.

The lady patted him on the head.

* Make tape recordings in which key words are omitted. Give the student a copy of the script and have him fill in the blank spaces as the tape is played.

Play a tape of a popular song. While students are reading the written song have them fill in the blanks with words which have been omitted.

You have never met me, so I'm going to tell you all about me.

I am not very big, but I'm very active. I have a father and a mother. I have many sisters, brothers, cousins, aunts and uncles.

Are you wondering what I look like? Use your imagination. Draw a picture of me in box one. (PAUSE)

After you have heard more of the story, you may change your mind about the way I look.

I have a home. It is a most intriguing home. It is very cool and comfortable. My large family and I have plenty of - how do YOU say it? Oh yes, elbow room. We have plenty of elbow room.

Do you know what my home looks like? Keep thinking.

Someday you, your mother, father, sisters, brothers, cousins, aunts and uncles may come to visit me. There will be plenty of room for all of you. Why not bring the neighbors? Bring all your school friends, too.

I have heard that someday you and your friends may decide to live in my home. We will not be crowded. But be sure to bring your own oxygen.

Now, do you know where I live? Be careful. Think about what you have heard. In box two, draw a picture of my home. (PAUSE) 2

Did you make your best guess?

I like to play games. Tag is one of my favorite games. My favorite sport is swimming. It seems to me I've been swimming all my life.

In box three, draw a picture of the way you think I look. (PAUSE) 3

What is your favorite game? What is your favorite sport?

I am sometimes in a school with other girls and boys. My school is quite different from yours. Most of the time we just swim and play tag. Would you like to be in a school like that?

In box four, draw a picture of my school. (PAUSE)

Do you know me now? Keep thinking.

Some plants are very important to me. In fact, I happen to know you use one of the same plants I use. You eat it in ice cream. Do you know the name of the plant in box five, and draw a picture of it. (PAUSE)

I'll tell you the name of the food. It's name is KELP, K-e-l-p. Kelp is a plant. It helps to make ice cream so-o-o smooth. Kelp grows at the bottom of the sea where I live. Have you again changed your mind about the way I look?

Draw my picture in box six. (PAUSE)

Did you draw a picture of a fish? That's right. My name is Mark Edward, and I'm a fish.

In the last boxes, draw a picture of me swimming and playing tag in my school. You may draw some kelp, too.

For demonstration only. Mark Edward, Dr. Ann S. Schmidt, L. S. ...

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